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TITLE: Condom Use in High-risk Neighborhoods: Results from Statewide Street Surveys in Louisiana, 1997-98

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BACKGROUND: Street outreach is an important prevention strategy for reaching persons at high-risk for HIV, such as injection drug users, commercial sex workers and high-risk heterosexuals. Ongoing evaluation of this intervention is essential. In addition, behavioral surveillance systems are needed to monitor changing trends in HIV-related risk behaviors, particularly among hard to reach high-risk populations.

METHODS: Community-based organizations (CBOs) in Louisiana administer quarterly surveys at three sites where outreach activities take place. These sites include housing developments, neighborhoods with high STD rates, and sites where drug use occurs. Surveys are collected systematically using a standard protocol and a brief self-administered form. We analyzed data collected by 22 CBOs between January 1997 and December 1998. Factors associated with condom use at last sex were examined separately for males and females using multivariate analyses.

RESULTS: Of the 13,193 respondents, 52% were male, 53% were younger than 25 and most were African-American (87%). Seventeen percent of males reported sex with men in the past 12 months. Overall, high-risk behaviors were prevalent: 44% had 3 or more sex partners, 17% reported using crack or cocaine, 15% had exchanged sex for money or drugs, and 7% had injected drugs in the past 12 months. Reported condom use at last sex steadily increased from 52% in first quarter 1997, to 56% in first quarter 1998 and reached 58% in fourth quarter 1998. Sixty-nine percent of respondents reported contact with an outreach worker in the last 6 months. Among females, condom use was independently associated with age<25 (OR: 1.4; 95% C.I.: 1.3-1.6), being African-American (OR: 1.4; 95% C.I.: 1.2-1.6), 2 or more sex partners (OR: 1.5; 95% C.I.: 1.4-1.7), no drug use (OR: 2.0; 95% C.I.: 1.8-2.2), survey year 1998 (OR: 1.2; 95% C.I.: 1.1-1.3), and contact with an outreach worker (OR: 1.5; 95% C.I.: 1.3-1.7). Condom use among males was associated with age<25 (OR: 1.7; 95% C.I.: 1.5-1.9), 2 or more sex partners (OR: 2.0; 95% C.I.: 1.8-2.4), no drug use (OR: 1.8; 95% C.I.: 1.5-1.9), sex with men (OR: 1.4; 95% C.I.: 1.2-1.6), and contact with an outreach worker (OR: 1.6; 95% C.I.: 1.4-1.8).

CONCLUSIONS: These data suggest that street outreach is reaching persons at high risk for HIV. Persons who had contact with an outreach worker were more likely to use condoms, and condom use increased over time, especially among women. Findings such as these provide information useful for evaluating street outreach programs. These results indicate areas where interventions can be improved; for example, outreach efforts among older persons and drug users should be enhanced. Periodic self-administered surveys in street outreach settings are a simple and cost-effective behavioral surveillance tool for monitoring trends in HIV-related behaviors.

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